

STATINTL

# The Cuban Invasion—II

## Rebels' Defeat Is Ascribed to Errors in Plan and Execution in Washington

By CHARLES W. MATHERS

This is the second of two articles on the unsuccessful attempt by anti-Castro forces to invade Cuba last April.

THE invasion of Cuba last intelligence Agency. The agency April, it is now clear, was made mistakes in planning, ex-  
-loit in Washington.

The small invading force was well led, its director, and Richard adjudged shortly before the M. Bissell, the deputy for plans operation, in a written report; and operations had in effect submitted by a Colonel Haw, charge of the Cuban affairs, will bring of the Marine Corps, to probably bear the burden of the battleworthy\* and comparatively failure by resigning their of-  
-ficials almost as well equipped forces.

and similar United States unit. This judgment had. The Joint Chiefs of Staff analysis some effect in made mistakes in failing to be Washington, and explicit and emphatic—in not observers contend, rounding the table enough and was borne out by the actual failure to commit all their fighting.

Despite the casualty statistics (in the interests of secrecy some 1,200 of the 1,500 to much of the Cuban planning 1,000 captured), the invaders and direction was oral.) gave a good account of themselves. The White House believes the rebels. Most sources agree that the military judgments were faulty and refugees fought well until the stakes inadequate, but their ammunition ran out that Pentagon sources deny this. They inflicted more casualties on Fidel Castro's forces than he had conceded, and that the Cuban militia in the area of the landing almost immediately defected in scores to the invaders' side only to defect back again to Dr. Castro after the failure of the invasion became obvious.

Like the British and French invasion of Port Said during the Suez crisis of 1956, the Cuban operational plans and their implementation

opprobrium that attaches to failure, and all the psychological and political disadvantages associated with the term "Yankee imperialism." And our backing of the Cuban refugees was so thinly disguised that it immediately exposed Washington to the same charges we would have faced had United States armed forces been employed.

The second great lesson of Cuba is the importance of tight policy control, direction and management of any venture involving the application of military power, no matter how small.

This control and management must center in the President as Commander in Chief; each President will use the machinery of government differently, but history has shown that ordered discussions and debates and staff work, and recorded decisions may bring new insight and prevent major mistakes. These procedures were largely lacking in the Kennedy Administration prior to the time of the Cuban invasion.

### Mistakes of the C.I.A.

A third lesson of Cuba is that no military or paramilitary operation should be under the control of the Central Intelligence Agency if it is of such a size and character that it is bound to become overt or open, rather than covert or secret. Operations of the size of the Cuban invasion should be managed by the Defense Department, which is far better staffed and has more expert military knowledge than the C.I.A.

Another lesson is the necessity of keeping all secret intelligence activities and operations

and they, too, have made mistakes. But the principles they embody—differing military approaches to the same military problem; the right of dissent; collective wisdom as opposed to the judgments of a single military mind—are essential in the future as they have been in the past.

In sum, the failure of Cuba was a failure of bureaucracy, but as in all failures it was essentially a failure of men, rather than of organization.

Read Admiral W. E. Eccles' brilliant comments in "Notes on the Cuban Crisis," a paper prepared under the sponsorship of the George Washington University Logistics Research Project.

He shows, in other words, that there can be a complete divorce between the national policy and power allotted to the task.

He points out that "in great crises of state, the President cannot afford to leave his three (analysis, clear conceptual unity, careful follow-up), to his advisers. The price of failure is of mediocre execution is

high." Admiral Eccles stresses that Cuban venture again shows that in "the prolonged conflict with the totalitarian regime, the fate of the Free World will be determined much more by the understanding of human emotion and the exercise of intellectual power than by technical skill."